

WORKERS WORLD

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Unions shut down France Millions march for economic justice

By G. Dunkel

More than 2.5 million people marched in more than 195 large and small cities in France on Jan. 29 demanding the government protect workers and not make the people pay the cost of a bailout of the financial establishment. The demonstrations were in response to a call from all of France's major labor unions.

The turnout was called "historic" in many cities—such as Perpignan, capital of the Catalan area in southeast France, where 20,000 marched. The march in Paris drew 300,000. The same number marched in Marseilles, a city with one-third the population of Paris, of whom 40 percent are first- or second-generation immigrants.

Some mass protests against government measures concerning students and youth drew bigger numbers during the past few years, but this was the largest protest in 20 years to be so broadly based in France's working class.

The first point in the unions' Jan. 5 joint call, which was the political basis of the protest, called for priority to be given to employment. The second point called for maintaining wages and reducing inequality. The unions called for orienting a government bailout toward employment and maintaining wage earners' living standards.

Bernard Thibault, head of the Confédération Générale du Travail labor federation, in a video clip on its website (www.cgt.fr), described these protests as very diverse, in that they drew on current wage-earners, the unemployed—who have councils in the CGT—retirees, youth and students.

According to a report in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, two major public opinion polls in France reported that 70 to 75 percent of the population supported the protests on Jan. 29, even though they

were focused on challenging the government and big business to change their policies. Generally in France, broad social movements spring up to oppose a concrete action the government has taken or is planning to take.

Many commentaries in the French-language press said the success of Jan. 29 reflected growing anger over how the government is favoring the banks and big business in its bailout plans.

The website for Jan. 29 includes a call for all the unions and committees that organized the protests to begin considering a general strike that would last longer than one day. (www.29janvier2009.fr)

While French workers have a constitutional right to strike, recent conservative governments have tried to limit that by imposing so-called "minimum service levels" in public agencies like mass transit, air traffic control, the post office, railroads and education. They want to prevent French workers from legally conducting an effective general strike.

About 75 percent of French workers have a legally enforceable right to their jobs.

Won through a high level of class struggle over decades, the substantial legal rights French workers have and their ability to enforce these rights legally without union membership have led many workers to avoid actually joining a union. Thus the level of unionization in France and the number of workers with a union contract is far fewer than, for example, in Britain or Italy, and even lower than in the United States.

But the class consciousness of French workers and their willingness to join in struggles led by unions—even without being members—means French unions have significant political authority. Even with fewer than 2 million members, the unions can be the nucleus of a far broader

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People fight back against foreclosures, budget cuts – Centerfold

Protest at Michigan State Capitol during governor's State of the State address.

WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Bill Clinton's cruel legacy Welfare vanishes as poverty soars

By Fred Goldstein

As millions are being thrown out of their homes and losing their jobs, state governments are reducing the meager assistance available to the poor and unemployed.

Some 2.6 million jobs were lost in 2008. The announcement of 500,000 to 600,000 more layoffs in January is expected soon and hundreds of thousands of job cuts are already slated for February.

Yet the number of people getting cash assistance during this crisis remained "at or near the lowest in 40 years." An article in the Feb. 2 New York Times reported the grim figures.

Eighteen states actually cut their welfare rolls in the midst of the crisis. Michigan, one of two states with official unemployment of more than 9 percent, cut its welfare rolls by 13 percent. Of the 12 states where unemployment grew most rapidly, eight of them either cut the rolls or kept them the same.

Of the 10 states with the highest child poverty rates, eight kept caseloads level or further reduced the rolls. Five states had double-digit reductions in the welfare rolls, including Texas, which ended

assistance to 15 percent of recipients.

These cuts, primarily aimed at women, come at a time when joblessness among women without a high school degree and aged 20 to 24 rose to 23.9 percent—from 17.9 percent a year ago. Celia Hagert of the Center for Public Policy in Austin, Texas, told the Times, "We're really just pushing families off the program."

Rhode Island closed the cases of 2,200 children because their families had been on the rolls longer than the 60-month lifetime limit.

Bill Clinton destroyed welfare, pushing millions into poverty

The program under which welfare benefits are dispensed is called Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). This draconian program was put in place in 1996 under the Clinton administration. It replaced a 60-year-old program initiated during the New Deal entitled Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Bill Clinton came to office pledging to "end welfare as we know it." That was shorthand for "We shall destroy welfare."

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'A hero's welcome'

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STIMULUS PLAN

A rotten compromise

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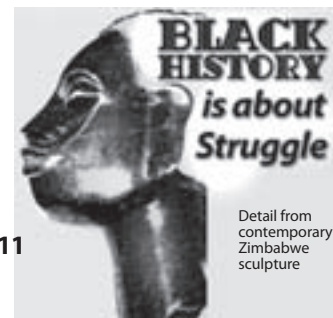
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Detail from
contemporary
Zimbabwe
sculpture

GAZA'S TUNNELS

A thousand lifelines

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Pentagon downplays GI suicides

By Dee Knight

The Pentagon reported in January that “Suicides among soldiers rose for the fourth straight year, exceeding the rate for civilians for the first time in decades.” (Associated Press, Jan. 29) A graph showed the increase—from about 80 GI suicides in 2003 to almost 150 in 2008.

Despite this admission, the Pentagon was downplaying the suicide story. The problem is much bigger, according to a new book by Iraq war correspondent Aaron Glantz: “The War Comes Home: Washington’s Battle Against America’s Veterans.”

A November 2007 CBS News investigation, says Glantz, found that 120 veterans kill themselves every week—over 5,000 per year. Glantz cites internal Veterans Administration documents validating these figures: “There are about 18 suicides *per day* among America’s 25 million veterans” of all wars, said the VA’s chief of mental health, Ira Katz.

Glantz says the Pentagon’s report, covering only active-duty GIs, is an underestimate “in part because they only include confirmed suicides. Many suicides are simply called accidents.” Garrett Reppenhagen, a former Army sniper in Iraq, told Glantz a woman in his unit “died when she shot herself in the chest with her M-16. The Army said it was an accident, but you can’t accidentally shoot yourself in the chest with an M-16... ”

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder afflicts nearly half a million Iraq and Afghanistan war vets. It is a prime cause of suicide, accidental death, and death at the hands of police—which some veterans provoke as a form of suicide.

Glantz tells of Sgt. James Dean, who was shot by Maryland state troopers on Christmas night in 2006 while sitting alone in his father’s farmhouse. Dean had returned home from 18 months in Afghanistan with what the VA diagnosed as PTSD: “The patient states he feels very nervous, has a hard time sleeping, feels nauseous in the a.m., and loses his temper a lot, ‘real bad.’” The evaluation mentions that Sgt. Dean “was nearby an explosion that destroyed a Humvee with four GIs killed in front of his eyes. ... The patient is tired of feeling bad.”

Dean “barricaded himself inside his farmhouse. ... He called his sister and told her he ‘just couldn’t do it anymore’ and fired a gunshot. Jamie’s sister called the emergency services hotline and the police showed up in force. ... Just past midnight ... a police sharpshooter shot Jamie Dean dead.”

It might have cost less, and saved a life, to mobilize a psychological crisis team, but that’s not the police way, or the Army way.

According to Glantz, by August 2008 “the Pentagon listed more than 78,000 service members as wounded, injured or ill; 324,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans had already visited a VA facility to receive health care for their injuries, and close to 300,000 (more than 30 percent of eligible veterans) had filed for disability.

“Physical brain damage is perhaps the most common injury; the RAND Corporation estimates that more than 320,000 veterans have experienced traumatic brain injury (TBI) while deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan. Many observers call TBI the ‘signature injury’ of the Iraq War because it happens so often after a soldier is hit with a gunshot or a blast from a roadside bomb.”

Rather than accept responsibility for the suffering of its veterans, the military machine punishes them. Take the case of Specialist Shaun Manuel, who was ordered to do a second tour in Iraq on the heels of losing his infant son.

Glantz tells the story: “Manuel never filed paperwork to medically excuse himself from the deployment. Instead, he withdrew and buried himself in alcohol. He estimates he drank three fifths of liquor a day. At one point, his wife had to call the police during a domestic disturbance. In response, the Army threw him in a local county jail and kicked him out of the military with a bad-conduct discharge, which will deny him medical benefits he might have been able to use to get his life back together again.”

The parents of Corporal Jeffrey Lucey of Belchertown, Mass., tell of filing a lawsuit alleging “wrongful death, medical malpractice, pain and suffering, and other damages” caused by the VA’s “negligence, carelessness and lack of skill” in treating their son, who hanged himself in his parents’ home in June 2004.

The Marine Corps had told Lucey’s parents it was “normal for veterans to need some time to adjust after their return from the war zone.” Lucey’s father said the Marine Corps told them, “Whatever you do, don’t force them or pressure them to do something they don’t feel comfortable doing.”

Maybe the whole military establishment and their civilian commanders should memorize that warning. Perhaps members of the House and Senate should be required to say it over and over again before passing legislation authorizing the president to use troops overseas. □



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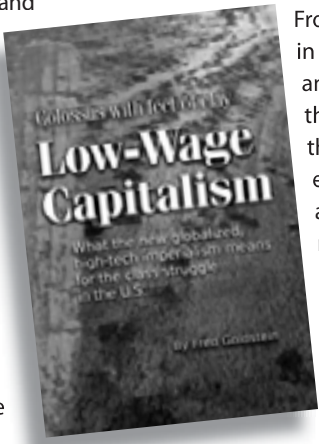
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LOW-WAGE CAPITALISM

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.

The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world’s workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.



From the point of view of Filipino workers in the United States, the largest exploited and abused Filipino workforce outside the Philippines, with over 4 million in the country, we are pleased with the exposé of imperialist globalization as the main culprit of global forced migration. Only by understanding capitalism and monopoly capitalism can we understand the root causes of global poverty and migration.”

– Berna Ellorin

Secretary-General,
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Message from Leonard Peltier

A hero's welcome

Following are excerpts from a Jan. 31 statement by imprisoned Native leader Leonard Peltier on his return to Lewisburg prison from Canaan, where he had been brutally beaten. Wherever you are and whatever you're doing on Feb. 6, stop and call the White House Comment Line and ask for executive clemency for Peltier. E-mail or pass out the phone number to friends, family members, colleagues. Ask everyone you know to simply take two minutes out of their lives to make this call. Call the White House Comment Line at 202-456-1111. Also, to sign an online petition for Peltier, go to www.iacenter.org.

I want to thank each and every one of you for your efforts in my urgent time of need. You cannot imagine how much my spirit has been lifted from the cards and letters, the phone calls and how everyone kept up the pressure.

My return to Lewisburg was met like a hero's welcome, and many people came to assure me of my safety there. It is so ironic that the prisoners in a federal maximum-security prison can guarantee my safety, but the Bureau of Prisons will not.

I did not say "cannot" but "will not" do so. You have to remember the BOP is a little brother to the FBI and they came from an illegitimate mother called the JUST-US (Justice) Department.

Do I sound a little angry? Well, I am angry that many of my friends have died in assuring my survival while I've been in prison. All the men who were involved in my escape at Lompoc died mysteriously soon after: Dallas Thundershield at Lompoc, Bobby Garcia at Terre Haute, and Rocky Duenas, whose body was never recovered. Standing Deer gave away his life when he revealed the assassination plot against me. He lived under the shadow of death for years, waiting to be killed for defying the government, until he was eventually paroled to Texas. He was murdered soon after the same



person who contracted him to have me assassinated warned him about his involvement with my campaign.

Surviving this attack brought back memories of those losses, and it is with tears of more gratitude in my eyes and in my heart that no one died this time.

If the BOP cannot guarantee my safety to the extent the prisoners here can, then I demand to be returned to my nation, Turtle Mountain, where I can be assured of my safety!

Turtle Mountain has issued a resolution to transfer me into their custody, and they have asked to meet with Obama on a nation-to-nation basis. This has to happen and it will when a lot of energy is placed behind it.

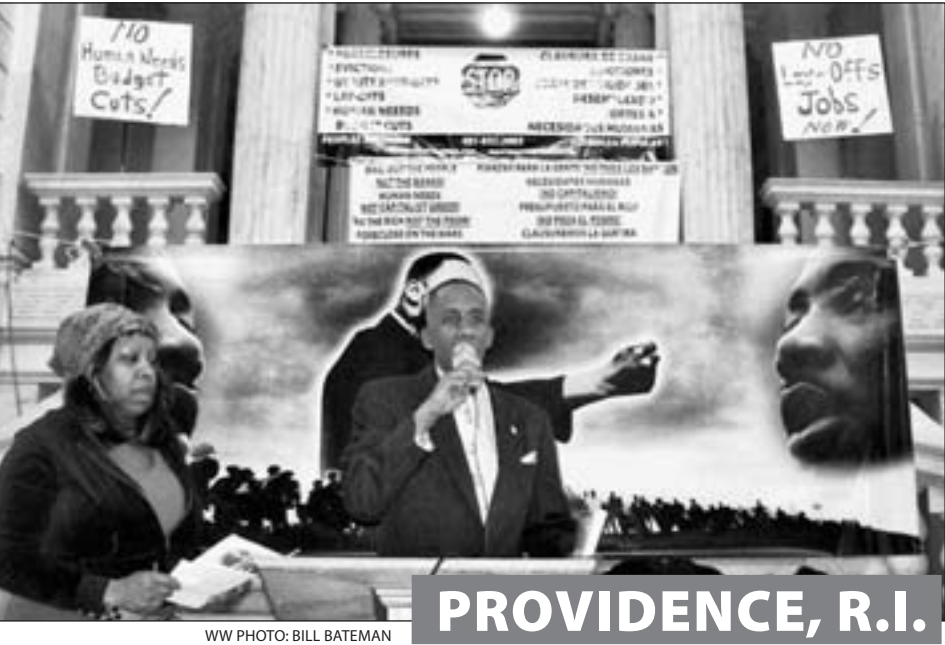
They see pressure, in the form of your letters and calls, growing and they know that my committee has been tirelessly developing plans to set up a wave of activity. The FBI is now afraid that they will fail to keep me falsely imprisoned. We are becoming stronger and we must keep building our network to succeed.

I am proud of the brothers and sisters, the Elders and my family who make up the committee; they have all personally sacrificed more than many people may ever know. I am asking all of my supporters and allies to follow the directions of the committee when the plans and strategies are presented at the Feb. 6th event in Boulder, Colo.

My hand in appreciation is extended to those who have held rallies and protests on my behalf to call attention to the attack on me. I also extend my gratitude to Cynthia McKinney, former congresswoman, for her recent letter to President Obama urging him to free other political prisoners and myself.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse, Dallas Thundershield, Bobby Garcia, Rocky Duenas, Standing Deer, and in The Spirit of Total Resistance,
Leonard Peltier

Groups organize for change



WW PHOTO: BILL BATEMAN

PROVIDENCE, R.I.

More than 50 people from many community groups gathered in the lobby rotunda of the Rhode Island State House on Jan. 19 for the Providence Martin Luther King Jr. 80th Birthday Mobilization for Progress. The rally called for an end to foreclosures, evictions, utility shut-offs and layoffs, and for funding human needs—not budget cuts. It promoted the slogans "Bail out the people, not the banks!" "Human needs, not capitalist greed!" "Tax the rich, not the poor!" and "Foreclose on the wars, not our homes!"

Speaker after speaker saluted the historic gain shown in the election of an African-American president but called

for a people's mobilization to fight for human needs and to bring about the meaningful change that people voted for in November. Grassroots organizing efforts that were highlighted included the struggle to remove the words "Providence Plantations" from the official name of the state of Rhode Island, fighting for environmental justice by opposing school construction on contaminated land, the George Wiley Center's organizing for jobs in safe environments, and to repeal the flat tax in Rhode Island. All vowed to continue organizing. Said one speaker, "If we don't change, there is no change."

—Frank Neisser

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

Oscar Grant—& YOU

From a Jan. 17 audio column. Listen to other Abu-Jamal audio columns at www.prisonradio.org.

Like you, I've seen the searing phone-camera tape of the killing of 22-year-old Oscar Grant of Oakland, Calif.

And although it's truly a terrible thing to see, it's almost exceeded by something just as shocking. That's been how the media has responded to this police killing by creating a defense of error.

This defense, that the killer cop who murdered Grant somehow mistook his pistol for his Taser, has been offered by both local and national news reporters even though they haven't heard word one from Johannes Mehserle, the BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) cop who wasn't even interviewed for weeks after shooting an unarmed man!

If you've ever wondered about the role of the media, let this be a lesson to you. You can see here that the claim that the corporate media is objective is but a cruel illusion.

Imagine this—if the roles were reversed; that is, if bystanders had footage of Grant shooting Mehserle, would the media be suggesting a defense for him?

Would Grant have been free to roam, to leave the state a week later? Would he have made bail?

The shooting of Oscar Grant III is but the latest West Coast version of Amadou Diallo, of Sean Bell and of hundreds of other Black men—and like them, don't be surprised if there is an acquittal, again.

Oscar Grant is you and you are him, because you know in the pit of your stomach that it could've been you and the same thing could've happened.

You know this. And what's worse is this—you pay for this every time you pay taxes and you endorse this every time you vote for politicians who sell out in a heartbeat.

You pay for your killers to kill you, in the name of a bogus, twisted law, and then pay for the State that defends him.

Something is terribly wrong here—and it's the system itself.

Until that is changed, nothing is changed, for we'll be out here again (in the streets)—chanting a different name.



PVN PHOTO

Postscript by WW reporter Larry Hales: Since this column was written, Mehserle, who had been allowed to leave the state, was arrested on a fugitive warrant in Nevada, charged with homicide and given a bail of \$3 million.

BART cop Tony Pirone, who is being investigated for punching Oscar Grant, had claimed that Mehserle told him after the shooting, "Tony, I thought he was going for a gun." Pirone now claims Mehserle told him, "I'm going to tase him, I'm going to tase him," implying that Mehserle mistakenly grabbed his gun instead of his Taser.

Judge Morris Jacobson, according to reports, scoffed at the change in story. But he granted bail, despite the fact that Mehserle had fled once to avoid questioning and that other allegations of abuse are surfacing.

As word spread in Oakland about the bail, protesters marched to the Oakland Police Department headquarters. The cops fired tear gas and pepper spray and arrested nine people.

As of Feb. 2 Mehserle had not posted bail.

Black Waxe Multimedia cordially invites you to several special events for Black History Month featuring

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"Disappearing Voices" Events Calendar

***Pan African Film Festival**
TUES., FEB. 10 to THURS., FEB. 12
Culver Plaza Theater
Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Theater
Los Angeles, Calif.
www.paff.org

***Solidarity Center**
SAT., FEB. 14, 7 P.M.
55 W. 17th St., 5th Fl., NY, NY 10011
212-633-6646
www.iacenter.org

***Essex College**
THURS., FEB. 19 at 7 P.M.
303 University Ave.
Newark, NJ 07102
www.essex.edu



Why wasn't Cheney impeached?

The truth behind selective prosecution

By Stephen Millies

The Illinois State Senate voted unanimously on Jan. 29 to throw Gov. Rod Blagojevich out of office. Compared to Dick Cheney's record, what Blagojevich is accused of amounts to peanuts. But Congress refused to touch Cheney or his fellow war criminal George W. Bush.

Everybody knows that Cheney got oodles of money from Halliburton, where he had been the CEO. In 2005 alone Cheney got \$211,465 in "deferred compensation" from the huge Pentagon contractor, \$6,000 more than his vice presidential salary. (matlb79.blogspot.com)

This was on top of stock options and a \$20-million retirement bonus. Is it any wonder the Pentagon awarded Halliburton fabulously lucrative contracts without any competitive bidding? CBS News estimated that just one of these deals, for putting out oil well fires in occupied Iraq, was potentially worth \$7 billion.

Unlike Cheney, Gov. Blagojevich was suddenly arrested on Dec. 9 by U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald. The day before, Blagojevich had come out in support of the Chicago workers who took over their Republic Windows factory.

Blagojevich is accused of seeking kickbacks in return for appointing a successor to President Barack Obama's Senate seat. Politicians have been wheeling and dealing since before 1776. Was Blagojevich's arrest by Bush's appointee Fitzgerald part of an attempted smear campaign against President Obama?

As a special prosecutor, Patrick Fitzgerald let Bush's top political advisor, Karl Rove, go free. Rove helped smear Valerie Plame and Charles Wilson, who exposed Bush's lie that Iraq tried to acquire uranium from Niger. This falsehood was an essential part of the war propaganda that led to the invasion of Iraq.

Wall Street financier J.P. Morgan reputedly told his cronies that everything had a good reason—and a real

reason. Capitalist society is corrupt from top to bottom. Whenever the capitalist government decides to indict a political official, we have to seek out the real reasons for it.

Selective prosecutions are retaliation, not justice

Blagojevich's predecessor in Springfield, Ill., was Gov. George Ryan. Was Ryan sent to federal prison because of corruption or because he imposed a moratorium on the death penalty? Ryan was also outspoken in demanding an end to the blockade of Cuba. This Republican governor actually visited Cuba.

Another former Illinois governor—Otto Kerner—became the first sitting federal judge to be sent to jail. Kerner's real crime was to declare, as chair of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, that white racism was the cause of the rebellions that swept the country in 1967.

Isn't it interesting that not a single member of the Daley family, whose machine still runs Chicago, has ever been arrested?

Black and Latina/o elected officials have been special victims of selective prosecutions and outright frame-ups.

Eddie Perez, the first Latino mayor of Hartford, Conn., was arrested on Jan. 27 for using a city contractor to fix his home. Perez was indicted for bribery even though he paid the contractor for the work.

Was this indictment retaliation for Hartford declaring itself a sanctuary city for immigrants?

When Charles Diggs Jr. became Michigan's first Black congressman in 1955, there were only two other African Americans in the House of Representatives. Diggs went to Mississippi to attend the phony trial of the killers of Black teenager Emmett Till, who was tortured to death.

Diggs became the first chair of the Congressional Black Caucus and demanded action against the apartheid regime in South Africa. Nixon put him on his "enemies list."

Diggs was accused of taking cam-

paign contributions from his paid staffers, a long-standing practice. Unlike the torturers of Emmett Till, Diggs was convicted on Oct. 7, 1978, and sent to prison.

Harlem Congressperson Adam Clayton Powell Jr. was also attacked for "corruption." His real crime was raising the federal minimum wage as head of the House Education and Labor Committee.

Powell was actually expelled from the House of Representatives in 1967. He was demanding that construction unions be opened to Black and Latina/o workers. AFL-CIO President George Meany helped put the knife in Powell's back.

Former Milwaukee Alderman Michael McGee Jr. is currently locked up. McGee fought police brutality, demanded Mumia Abu-Jamal's freedom and requested heating oil assistance from Venezuela. This Black elected official wasn't even allowed to post bail.

The feds have arrested Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, a fighter for the poor and the oppressed, on the basis of an FBI "sting" operation.

The FBI hounded Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. It conducted the Cointelpro program that tried to destroy Black and other progressive organizations. FBI sting operations aimed at framing up elected officials are in the same tradition.

New Jersey Sen. Harrison Williams was sent to jail in the "Abscam" case. This FBI-staged affair was a racist attack on Arab people. It involved a convicted con artist posing as an Arab sheik trying to entrap people. Its name derived from "Abdul Scam."

Sen. Williams was a co-sponsor of OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Corporations hated this law and Republicans attacked it in the 1980 election.

Tens of thousands of lives have been saved because of OSHA regulations. Workers Memorial Day is held on April 28 every year to commemorate OSHA going into effect on April 28, 1971. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

Most union growth in 25 years

With 16.1 million members at the end of 2008, the organized labor movement rose to 12.4 percent of the overall work force, up from 12.1 percent in 2007, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported on Jan. 28. The 428,000 new members represent the biggest gain in organized labor in 25 years. Over half the new members—275,000—were government workers, while more than 150,000 worked in the private sector. According to the BLS, 36.8 percent of government employees belong to unions, while only 7.6 percent of workers in private industry are organized. Even the Jan. 28 New York Times had to admit, "Typically, state and city officials do not fight unionization efforts, while private-sector employers, fearing higher labor costs, often vigorously resist organizing drives." The Times continued, "Unions have made significant gains in organizing by persuading various governors and state legislatures to allow the unionization of tens of thousands of teachers, home-health aides and home-based child care providers." The vast majority of these workers are women. Large gains were also reported among Latin@s and in the Western states, noted the Center for Economic and Policy Research. (cepr.net, Jan. 28)

Obama signs pay equity bill

On Jan. 29 President Barack Obama signed his first bill, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, which makes it easier for workers to sue when they suspect pay discrimination. The president asserted that there should no longer be "second class citizens in our work places, and that it's not just unfair and illegal—but bad for business—to pay someone less because of their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion or disability." The bill overturned a reactionary 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision. Obama added that the pay gap between men's and women's wages needs to be closed to "ensure that our daughters have the same rights, the same chances, and the same freedom to pursue their dreams as our sons." But what will happen to "fair pay" if workers are asked to make "sacrifices" as the recession deepens?

Republic workers' victory tour

Representatives of the courageous workers at Chicago's Republic Windows & Doors, who held an electrifying six-day sit-down strike in December to win severance pay and unpaid wages, are touring the East Coast starting Jan. 31 in New York City. Sponsored by Jobs with Justice coalitions, along with other community, religious and labor activists, the workers, members of the United Electrical workers union, are talking about their struggle and "how we can take direct action to resist, fight for recovery that puts workers before Wall Street and keeps people in their homes." (E-mail, jwj.org, Jan. 30) Meetings will be held in Boston on Feb. 5, Providence, R.I., on Feb. 6, Detroit on Feb. 9, Cleveland on Feb. 10, Buffalo on Feb. 12 and Raleigh, N.C. on Feb. 14. For more information, visit jwj.org.

Health-care workers organize in Mass.

An agreement for peaceful labor relations was announced Jan. 27 between Caritas Christi, a chain of six hospitals owned by the Archdiocese of Boston, and Local 1199 of the Service Employees union. (Boston Globe) Management promised the union that it will not interfere with its effort to organize Caritas Christi's 13,000 health-care workers. The Service Employees launched a campaign to unionize all workers, not just individual trades like nurses or electricians, in Boston's big hospitals about two years ago. This is the first breakthrough in that effort.

SAG resumes negotiations

After intense internal debate and dissension, the Screen Actors Guild has opted to return to the negotiating table with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers on Feb. 3 and 4. (sag.org, Jan. 28) The AMPTP issued its final offer June 30. SAG rejected it based on two issues: use of non-union actors on Internet productions costing less than \$15,000 a minute and no residuals (payment) for work used in new media. □



Solidarity with Stella D'oro workers

Solidarity! Some 500 supporters of striking bakery workers marched Jan. 31 from their struck plant to a major shopping center in the South Bronx. The workers have been out since last August. The marchers called on shoppers to boycott Stella D'oro, a local company in New York, with the slogan,

"No contract, no cookies!"

Besides some community groups, a number of unions also marched, including PSC-AFT 2334 representing faculty and staff at the City University of New York, Teamsters and Transit Workers.

—Report and photo by G. Dunkel

NEW YORK

Republic workers speak on factory takeover

The heroic six-day factory occupation this past December by the Republic Windows and Doors workers in Chicago continues to resonate among labor activists and progressive forces throughout the United States.

Vivid proof of this was the standing-room-only crowd that greeted two participants in the occupation at a Jan. 31 victory meeting at Judson Memorial Church in New York's Greenwich Village. The meeting was organized by Jobs With Justice.

Raul Flores and Melvin Maclin, members of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America, Local 1110, are on a national tour to explain why and how the plant takeover happened. During their inspiring remarks, they also thanked the movement, including the UE national union, for all the solidarity they have received during and since the takeover.

Some 250 workers, the majority Latino/a immigrants and African Americans, decided to take over the factory to protest Republic management's abrupt announcement closing their plant without the legally required 60-day notification. The management said they took this action because the banks had refused to extend a line of credit to the factory.

The success of the takeover and the broad labor and community solidarity behind it forced Bank of America, the Republic factory's biggest creditor, to provide 60 days of fully funded severance pay, health insurance and vacation pay to the workers.

Flores and Maclin both praised the



leadership role women workers played during the occupation. Flores added that the women were the first ones to say they were willing to be arrested if necessary.

Maclin, a vice president of UE Local 1110, spoke about the arrogance Bank of America negotiators showed toward the union's representatives at talks during the takeover. It made their resolve even stronger. Both Flores and Maclin spoke on the need for all workers to unite and fight back for justice and dignity, especially during these very hard economic times.



Top photo: Left to right, UE members Mark Meinster, Marvin Maclin and Raul Flores. Left, Stella D'oro workers, supporters.

Earlier that day in the Bronx, Flores and Maclin had walked the picket line alongside striking Stella D'oro workers. These strikers and their supporters in turn attended the Republic event, where they talked about their own struggle for justice, ongoing since last August when contract negotiations broke down.

Ed Ott, executive director of the New York Central Labor Council, talked about the significance of the Republic workers' takeover and the need to build labor solidarity in New York City with the Stella D'oro strikers and Domestic Workers United, to name a few.

—Report & photos by Monica Moorehead

Bill Clinton's cruel legacy

Welfare vanishes as poverty soars

Continued from page 1

And that is what Clinton did, in a bloc with the Republican-controlled Congress under the leadership of right-wing reactionary Newt Gingrich. After signing the law, Clinton gloated that "The era of big government is over."

Of course, Clinton did not mean the "big government" of the Pentagon, the FBI, the CIA, etc. What he did was carry out a long-sought-after goal of the ruling class: letting them get their hands on the cash that had been given to single mothers with children who were left under capitalism to flounder on their own in poverty. They further wanted to drive millions of impoverished women off the rolls in order to create a vast, low-wage, highly exploitable addition to the workforce.

Under AFDC, women with children who met conditions of low or no income, as well as individual men with low or no income who were unemployable, were entitled to apply for assistance. The cash assistance was minimal and the process of applying for it was cumbersome and degrading. Submitting to harassing, invasive monthly inspections to retain your benefits was even more degrading. Since the benefit was primarily for single mothers, women had to conceal any relationship with a male just to keep the pittance doled out by the capitalist state.

Nevertheless, AFDC was vital to the existence of millions of women and their children. Because of generations of racist discrimination, they were disproportion-

ately African-American and Latina, but millions of poor white families also benefited. It was a basic support at the level of survival. And it was guaranteed by law to anyone who qualified.

Under Clinton the entitlement came to a cruel end. TANF gave block grants in fixed amounts to the states to pretty much do with as they pleased. The states were required to move millions of poor women off the roles in infamous "welfare to work" programs. Many reactionary governors relished the prospect of driving into the workforce these poor women, who often wound up forced to take low-paying, menial jobs either in the public or private sector.

Workers had to put in a full week at these low-paying jobs to earn diminished welfare benefits and could only get them for five years total during their lifetime. Women who tried to go to school to get a skill were often forced to choose between benefits and school if their education forced them to reduce their work hours.

The bill was so draconian that Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Peter Edelman resigned in protest and wrote a long indictment in the March 1997 issue of Atlantic Monthly entitled "The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done."

At that time this author wrote an open letter to Edelman in the March 27, 1997, issue of Workers World newspaper, entitled "Let's Overturn the Welfare Law." (workers.org/ww/1997/edelman.html)

Our letter said in part: "We are inclined to agree with the title of the article ...

[although Clinton] has done many terrible things. These include the crime bill with its funding for prisons, police and capital punishment; the anti-terrorism bill that increased the FBI's repressive power and did away with the right of habeas corpus; extending the criminal blockade of Cuba by signing the Helms-Burton Act; continuing the murderous sanctions against Iraq and many other reactionary measures."

The letter cited how Edelman showed that "a total of 11 million families—10 percent of all American families—would lose income under the bill. This included more than 8 million families with children, many of the working families affected by food-stamp cuts, which would average about \$1,300 per family."

"You show," continued the letter, "that almost 800,000 immigrants will lose Supplemental Security Income benefits and food stamps to the tune of \$24 billion over six years. And that 100,000-200,000 disabled children, mostly those with multiple disabilities, will lose SSI."

Edelman said at the time, "This is hardly a welfare bill ... these are just cuts" for poor and working families.

The open letter concluded with a call to point the finger at the Pentagon, the bankers and the capitalists and to call forth a movement to overturn the law.

The other shoe has dropped

Most importantly, the new law set a fixed amount for the total national welfare bill, regardless of how many people

needed assistance. Not only was this totally vicious, highly racist and unjust at the time, but it inevitably would lead to disaster for all workers. The minute there was an economic crisis and the workers ran out of unemployment benefits, the masses of unemployed would be plunged into dire poverty and suffering.

Now the country is in the midst of an enormous and growing economic crisis that is engulfing wider and wider sections of the workers. But because of the Clinton destruction of welfare, with the switch from AFDC to TANF, caseloads have fallen every year since 1994. The present level of 4.1 million has not been seen since 1964. The fact is that cash benefits paid out under TANF as of October 2008 were only 30 percent of the benefits that had been paid out under AFDC.

The Clinton group has largely moved into the present administration, including Hillary Rodham Clinton and Rahm Emanuel, among others. This is the group that helped Clinton and Gingrich wield the ax that fell upon the workers and the oppressed and that is intensifying suffering now.

The only road to reverse this devastating onslaught against the workers and the oppressed is to mobilize a massive fight-back campaign that demands not only minimal benefits, but the full guarantee of a job at living wages with benefits or a livable income. This should be the true entitlement of the multinational working class. □

'Power concedes nothing

Riders, workers tell transit bosses:

'MTA—we won't pay!'

By Jaimeson Champion
Brooklyn, N.Y.

"If you see something, say something." This phrase is printed on thousands of posters throughout the New York City transit system. It urges riders to notify the authorities regarding any threat to public safety on the transit lines.

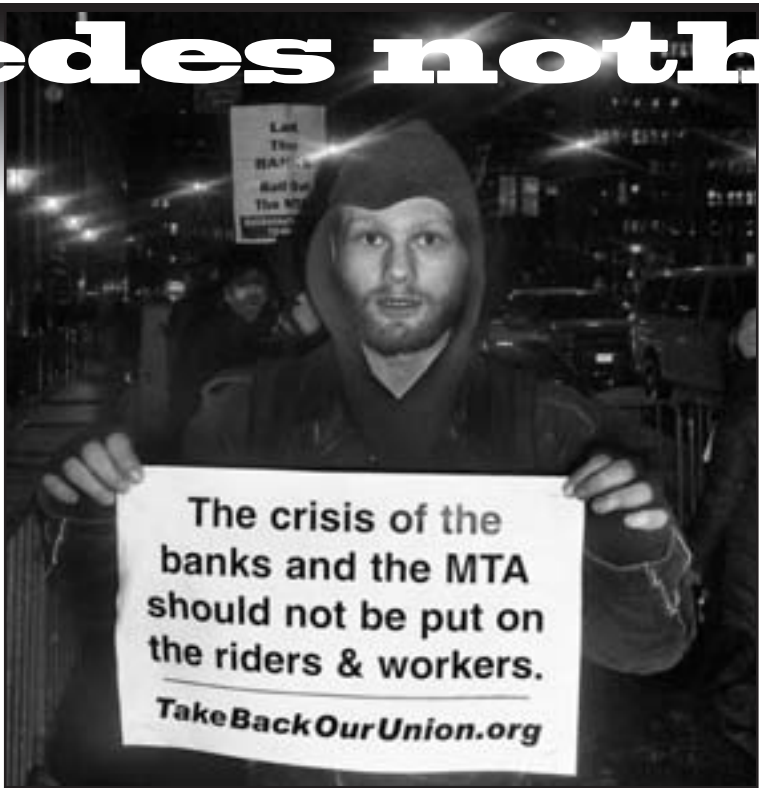
Thousands of outraged transit riders and transit workers across the greater New York area are saying that the Metropolitan Transit Authority and its proposed fare hikes and service cuts are posing direct threats to public safety on the transit system.

In efforts to make up a supposed \$1.2 billion budget shortfall, the MTA is proposing reductions to the transit work force through the closing of station booths, an increase in the fare from \$2.00 per ride to \$2.50, and the wholesale elimination of vital subway and bus routes across the five boroughs.

The MTA has also announced the unconscionable decision to raise the Access-A-Ride fare by 200 percent, from \$2 to \$6. Access-A-Ride is a transportation service for the elderly and disabled, the majority of whom survive on low fixed incomes. The MTA's attacks are designed to make the workers and oppressed pay for the mismanagement and misdeeds of the MTA bigwigs and the banks to which they are beholden.



Five hundred transit riders and workers braved snow and rain on Jan. 28 to pack a public hearing and pre-hearing rally organized by the Bail Out the People Movement in downtown Brooklyn. In timed speeches given before the 17-member MTA board, more than 100 people gave testimonies



WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Riders and transit workers join forces against the MTA.

denouncing the proposed service cuts and fare hikes. Speakers told the board that the proposed budget is an unjust and draconian attack on the poor and working-class residents of New York City.

In Brooklyn, the MTA is proposing the elimination of a number of bus lines that serve as vital transportation arteries. At the public hearing, dozens of speakers said

that the proposed elimination of the B25 bus line will be devastating to the predominantly Black and Latina/o neighborhoods of Bedford Stuyvesant and East New York. The B25 bus is one of the primary ways people access the main commercial strip on Fulton Street in those neighborhoods.

The MTA has attempted to defend its callous decision to eliminate bus routes such as the B25 by saying that there is comparable subway service nearby. The MTA refuses to acknowledge that the majority of subway stations that are near these bus routes do not have elevators, and are thus inaccessible to many elderly and disabled riders.

Mike Godino from the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled told the MTA board, "The MTA should not have the ability to imprison people in their homes, and that is exactly what you will be doing to elderly and disabled people if you go forward with these service cuts and fare hikes."

Milagros Franco, a disabled transit rider who attended the public hearing, told

Workers World: "I use Access-A-Ride to get to work, to get to the doctor's, to get to the grocery store, to get to everything. If they raise the fare, I am going to increasingly become a prisoner in my own home. I'm going to be forced to choose between getting food at the grocery store or going to the doctor's office. It's not fair that I have to choose. It's ridiculous that the MTA is targeting the most vulnerable populations. It's disgusting. It makes me angry. Access-A-Ride means independence for a lot of people in this city. How can we have independence if we can't afford it?"

The MTA is attempting to paint the \$1.2 billion budget shortfall as an unexpected result of the global financial crisis. They have attempted to pass off the cuts and fare hikes as emergency measures borne out of dire fiscal circumstances. But the reality is that since its inception, the MTA has always served as a vehicle that the ruling class uses to transfer public funds directly to the big banks.

The MTA has mismanaged and plundered the people's tax monies and is underserving of the people's trust. If the MTA is truly facing a dire budget shortfall, then they should go to the banks and renegotiate their debt service or beg for a bailout. The MTA must be halted in its attempts to shift its financial problems onto the backs of the workers and oppressed, who are already struggling to survive in this deepening recession.

The only way the MTA can be stopped is by a united people's movement. For more information on the growing fightback against the MTA, visit www.bailout-people.org. □

93-year-old freezes in own home

People demand no utility cutoffs

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

An elderly widower died an excruciating death from hypothermia in Bay City, Mich., a small city 100 miles north of Detroit. Marvin E. Schur, age 93, froze to death in his own home after the city's power company installed a "limiting device," which shuts off electricity when it reaches a minimal usage level. Bay City Electric Light & Power installed it on Schur's home on Jan. 13 because he was \$1,000 behind in his payments.

His frozen body was found by a neighbor on Jan. 17. The unpaid utility bills, with cash clipped to them, were on his kitchen table. (Detroit News, Jan. 27)

Schur was a retired pattern-maker who once worked at Baker-Perkins Co. in Saginaw. He was a World War II veteran, an army medic who was wounded in combat in the South Pacific.

News of Schur's death spread rapidly, causing outrage. Hundreds of people called the city government to demand action. Bay City officials ordered the power company to immediately remove limiting devices from residential homes.

State representative Jeff Mayes of Bay City, chair of the House Energy and Technology Committee, called for a moratorium on utility shutoffs as well as the use of limiting devices "in order to ensure that this does not happen again."

Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox explained that municipal utilities such

as Bay City Electric Light & Power don't have to follow Michigan Public Service Commission rules, which ban power shutoffs on seniors and disabled people from Nov. 1 to April 1. According to Cox, only state-regulated commercial utilities such as DTE Energy and Consumers Energy must follow PSC rules. (Bay City Times, Jan. 28)

Cox's office "will gather some facts to see if we shouldn't suggest to the Legislature that all utilities—whether they're regulated utilities or municipal utilities—comply with the rules of the Michigan Public Service Commission regarding power shutoffs of the elderly during winter time."

A slow, painful death

Dr. Kanu Virani, the deputy chief medical examiner for Oakland County who performed an autopsy on Schur, said it was the first time in 18 years that he had performed an autopsy on someone who had died from freezing inside a building. Virani said Schur's death from hypothermia was a lingering, painful one. The body shuts down slowly. "The exposed parts of the body start getting a burning pain," he said. "It becomes intense, like frostbite." (Detroit News, Jan. 27)

Schur's nephew, 66-year-old William Walworth of Ormond Beach, Fla., said it was foolish to think something like his uncle's "horrible" death couldn't occur again. He pointed out that snow and ice

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As Arizona cuts education budget

Students protest at state Capitol

By Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Ariz.

On Jan. 28 over 2,000 students from Arizona's three state universities descended on the state Capitol building in Phoenix to protest the legislature's proposal to slash university funding by over \$140 million for the remainder of this fiscal year (Feb. 1 to June 30, 2009). The proposed cuts would mean an end to many financial aid programs, increases in tuition and reductions in the number of classes offered.

The state faces a \$1.6 billion budget deficit for 2009 and estimates a \$3 billion deficit for fiscal year 2010. Gov. Jan Brewer made it clear that this burden will be placed on the backs of the working and

poor people of Arizona. The new governor signed the budget proposal into law on Feb. 1 before rushing off to Florida to watch "her team" play in the Super Bowl.

The budget cuts not only drastically affect the university system, but also heavily impact Arizona's community colleges, K-12 schools, vocational training and tutoring programs. About two-thirds of the budget shortfall will be extracted from education programs across the state.

Instead of cutting the millions of dollars budgeted to Joe Arpaio, the racist sheriff, or the millions used to build and pay for private prisons which house undocumented workers, the legislature has denied the people something they have a right to: education. □

ing without a demand'
-FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Detroit sheriff suspends foreclosure sales

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans announced Feb. 2 that his office will immediately suspend all sales on foreclosed homes in the county.

“Today I will be stopping all mortgage foreclosure sales in Wayne County beginning with the sales that were scheduled for this Wednesday,” Evans said. “I am doing so because it’s my opinion that recently enacted federal laws provide protections for homeowners facing foreclosure.”

Evans met with attorneys familiar with foreclosure law on Jan. 29. He said in a press conference that federal law preempts state laws and that he believes the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) approved by Congress last fall requires the secretary of the Treasury to implement a plan to mitigate foreclosures and to encourage loan servicers to modify mortgages to allow homeowners to stay in their homes.

In rotten compromise

Dems drop health-care option from stimulus plan

By Kathy Durkin

When the House version of the \$819-billion economic stimulus plan passed on Jan. 28, one important section was missing. It pertained to expansion of health care services for low-income women.

The original bill contained the Medicaid Family Planning State Option. States have been required to obtain a Department of Health and Human Services waiver to use Medicaid funds for family planning services, even cancer screenings; 27 states have done this. The provision would have permitted the remaining 23 states to more easily and quickly expand eligibility for these programs to more low-income women, without applying for the time-consuming and costly waiver.

This simple provision would have provided coverage for millions of women who desperately need these services now, at a time of severe economic crisis, when so many are losing homes, jobs and health insurance. Increasing numbers of women now need safety-net health care and family planning services, including costly contraceptives.

House Republicans had launched a hostile campaign, rife with misinformation, against the inclusion of this provision in the stimulus package, threatening to veto the entire bill. Led by House Minority Leader John Boehner, the anti-choice Republican right wing zeroed in on this part of the bill, mocked the provision as “frivolous,” criticized its alleged cost—\$550 million over 10 years, a drop in the bucket in the stimulus plan—and whipped up venom against it.

One phony allegation was that it wouldn’t create jobs. In reality, expanding family planning to cover more people would add health care jobs.

Ultraright-wing media pundits, including the misogynist Rush Limbaugh, and

Evans took this action after he sent a letter to Gov. Jennifer Granholm requesting a declaration of a state of emergency in Wayne County and a six-month moratorium on foreclosures.

“Not only is Wayne County experiencing a time of great public crisis, disaster and catastrophe, public safety is imperiled by the number of foreclosed citizens living on the street or committing crimes with the actual intent of being jailed,” Sheriff Evans’ letter said. (Detroit News, Jan. 26)

The sheriff’s office saw a 32 percent increase in foreclosure sales between 2006 and 2007, the letter said.

Granholm’s office dismissed Evans’ letter. Spokesperson Liz Boyd stated, “The governor does not have the legal authority to declare a moratorium.” When asked if the governor would declare a state of emergency as requested in Evans’ letter, Boyd said, “I don’t know how much more clear I can be other than saying the governor does not have the authority to declare a morato-

rium.” (Michigan Messenger, Jan. 23)

Attorneys and organizers with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions say the governor does have executive authority, clearly outlined in Michigan law, to take measures such as a declaration of emergency and imposition of a moratorium on foreclosures. Granholm has consistently refused to take such action.

A coalition press release stated: “Had Granholm acted two years ago when we first raised these demands to her, tens of thousands of Michiganders would still be in their homes; our communities would not have been destroyed with homes in Detroit selling at a median price of \$7,500 in 2008; and countless individuals would not have frozen to death. Along with the banks and financial interests who have plundered the people of Michigan, Granholm, through her deliberate indifference, is fully culpable for the incredible suffering experienced by poor and working people in our state.

“On Feb. 3, we will again be demonstrating at the governor’s State of the State address. It’s too late for half measures. The time is now for Granholm to declare a state of economic emergency in Michigan and place a two-year moratorium on fore-



closures, evictions and utility shutoffs. Nothing less will suffice. A two-year moratorium will allow the people of Michigan to survive while the Obama (two-year) stimulus plan has a chance to take effect. There is plenty of legal precedent for this action and the governor knows it. The question is, who is Granholm going to represent, the workers and poor or the banking interests which have been bailed out with trillions of our tax dollars?”

State Sen. Hansen Clarke has reintroduced a bill in the state legislature for a two-year moratorium on foreclosures—SB 29. In 2008 Clarke’s SB 1306, an identical bill, languished in the banking committee. Its chair, Sen. Randy Richardville, whose election campaigns have been heavily financed by bankers, refused to hold public hearings on it.

Michigan is among the top 10 states for households in foreclosure. In 2008, more than 3 million foreclosure filings were initiated in the U.S., an 81 percent increase from 2007 and a 225 percent increase in total properties in foreclosure from 2006. (realttytrac.com, Jan. 15) □

Community struggle keeps libraries open

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Months of community organizing to stop the closing of 11 branch libraries ended in a victory on Jan. 28 when Mayor Michael Nutter announced all libraries would remain open through June 30, the end of the city’s fiscal year.

Nutter first proposed shutting 11 of the city’s 54 branch libraries in early November to close a \$1 billion budget gap in the city’s five-year plan. Nearly all the targeted libraries were in working-class or low-income African-American neighborhoods.

The burden of these closings on the targeted communities was compounded by the lack of libraries in public schools. The libraries also provide the only access to computers for unemployed adults searching for jobs and senior citizens using the Internet. Child care centers that rely on these branch libraries to introduce preschoolers to books played a major role in the movement to keep them open.

Aided by library advocates, community residents quickly sprang into action to oppose the closings. Until late December they held weekly demonstrations outside the branch libraries as well as citywide rallies. They filled City Council meetings and a series of “town hall” meetings Nutter held to try to sell his budget plan.

In December, Common Pleas Judge Idee Fox ruled in favor of seven library patrons and three Council members who sued Nutter, citing a 20-year-old ordinance requiring the Council’s approval to close city buildings. Nutter had not consulted City Council members before proposing the cuts.

The danger of broader cuts is not over. Even with the announcement that the libraries would remain open, there was uncertainty about how many days per week each library would stay open. Workers World also learned that the library administration has threatened layoffs at the central library and blamed this on the activists who kept the branch libraries open.

Nutter’s budget ax also targeted several city fire companies, which closed in January despite demonstrations by community residents and firefighters. Brian McBride, president of Local 22 of the International Association of Firefighters, warned that “people will die” because of these closures.

In the second round of cutbacks, Nutter is proposing ending weekly trash pickup, cutting services for the homeless, closing free health clinics and increasing some property taxes.

Opponents of cutbacks that target the city’s poorest residents have called for an elimination or modification of Philadelphia’s 10-year tax abatement program that began in 2000. Newly constructed residential, commercial and industrial properties pay few or no taxes under this program. Over 8,000 owners of expensive condominiums were granted abatements of up to \$10,000 a year for 10 years.

The Board of Revision of Taxes, in a January report, listed 4,027 new residential properties in the city receiving abatements worth \$22.9 million in property taxes for 10 years and 1,663 new commercial and industrial properties getting abatements worth \$23.3 million in taxes for 10 years. □

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As crisis hits

Workers rebel in East Europe

By Heather Cottin

Thousands of demonstrators in Lithuania, Latvia and Bulgaria have attacked government buildings and called on their governments to resign as unemployment soars in Eastern Europe.

Living standards in these countries were always below those for many countries in the imperialist West. But during the existence of the USSR and the socialist bloc, workers in these countries enjoyed secure jobs and guaranteed access to education, health care and retirement benefits.

Experts predict a regional increase of 15 million to 18 million unemployed in the coming months, with no relief as jobs for immigrants disappear in Western Europe and the United States.

Neil Shearing at Capital Economics in London says that “Unemployment in the Baltic countries could spike to more than 15 percent. Industry has absolutely collapsed because of shrinking demand” in Western Europe and the U.S. He continues, “The recession will essentially engulf the entire economy of the region.” (Radio

Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Jan. 29)

The world capitalist economy is collapsing. The rightist pro-capitalist regimes that have been ruling these countries since the early 1990s are imposing severe cuts on the remaining social safety-net programs. As a result, workers are rising up in protest.

On Jan. 16, more than 10,000 people converged on Riga’s 13th-century cathedral and then marched on parliament to protest the Latvian government’s economic program. The Latvian central bank governor has pronounced the economy “clinically dead.” (The Age, Australia, Feb. 1)

On the next day there were similar scenes in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital. Enraged throngs of thousands gathered outside parliament chanting, “Thieves, thieves!” (World Press, Jan. 30) Their anger was directed at the government, which had passed IMF-prescribed “market reforms.” This resulted in corruption, drastic cuts in government spending for social services, inflation, tax hikes and now a huge jump in unemployment.

While youths hurled cobblestones at

government buildings and shop windows, doctors, police, farmers and workers protested against poor pay and the government austerity policy.

The following week, students, teachers, doctors and public servants rallied outside Bulgaria’s parliament demanding improved economic rights and an end to corruption.

According to Business Week of Jan. 29, Estonia and Hungary are on the verge of similar uprisings. In Hungary, industrial output is at its lowest in 16 years. The currency sank to a record low against the euro as the government in Budapest announced more spending cuts. (The Age, Feb. 1) Ukraine’s economy, too, is in freefall.

In a Jan. 22 BBC interview, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, head of the International Monetary Fund, predicted more unrest, saying it could happen “almost everywhere. It may worsen in the coming months.”

The republics of the former USSR and Eastern Europe are “much more vulnerable both economically and politically than several months ago,” said Joanna Gorska, deputy head of the Eurasia desk at Exclusive Analysis. (Reuters, Jan. 30)

Why are these former socialist countries—the so-called New Europe—facing such economic devastation and attendant mass uprisings?

Shock therapy kills ‘patients’

All of Eastern Europe was forced, after “the fall of communism,” to accept an economic doctrine called “shock therapy.” Devised by Harvard-trained economics professor Jeffrey Sachs, this policy was characterized by the frantic wholesale privatization of state-owned industries, lowered wages, mass unemployment and price deregulations. Shock therapy involved drastic spending cuts in health and education and curtailments in pension benefits.

“Businessmen, not economists, will determine the new technologies, organizational systems and management techniques that will be the source of Eastern

Europe’s reinvigoration,” Sachs said. (Economist, Jan. 13, 1990)

With the public sector dismantled, Western corporations took advantage of the cheap labor of a desperate but well-educated workforce. Since 1989 more than 70,000 enterprises have been privatized in Central and Eastern Europe.

The boom that followed, fuelled by easy credit, investment from dubious sources, unbridled speculation and shady property deals, turned to bust with the collapse of the global banking system and the evaporation of global markets.

The human suffering that resulted is so widespread that the British medical journal The Lancet in a recent article attributed about 1 million early deaths in the 1990s in the former “Soviet bloc” to the shock doctrine, the mass privatization of state-owned industries, price deregulation accompanied by drastic spending cuts in health and education, and curtailments in pension benefits.

The report noted that life expectancy had declined by five to seven years in some newly capitalist Eastern European countries, and that “In the early to mid-1990s in countries undergoing post-Soviet transformation, there were more than 3 million premature deaths and the region lost at least 10 million adult males.” (International Herald Tribune, Jan. 15)

The International Labor Organization has stated that shock therapy caused male deaths to rise 42 percent in Russia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia between 1991 and 1994, coinciding with a 305-percent increase in unemployment. (Agence France Presse, Jan. 14)

The Czech, Polish, Hungarian and Romanian currencies have fallen between 3.8 and 11.6 percent since the beginning of January, and more decline is expected.

There is, however, an alternative to accepting unemployment and death: a revival of workers’ struggle. From his own ruling-class point of view, Royal Bank of Canada strategist Nigel Rendell warned of “governments collapsing and sudden moves to the left” all over Eastern Europe and the former USSR. (Reuters, Jan 30) □

Cuban Five seek Supreme Court review

By Cheryl LaBash

The struggle to free the Cuban Five entered a new stage Jan. 30 when the defense team filed a formal request—a petition for a writ of certiorari—asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the decisions of lower courts that have caused these five Cuban antiterrorist heroes to be imprisoned in the United States since 1998.

The 50-page legal petition highlights international support for the Five and the widespread recognition that extreme injustice and bias led to their prosecution and imprisonment.

During the next few months the Supreme Court will decide whether or not to hear the arguments in the case. Only a few cases are selected for review each year.

The solidarity movement in the U.S. will need to expand public events, visibility and publicity on this important struggle. The Cuban Five are well known around the world, but the U.S. media has only begun to make their case as widely known in the U.S.

Major unions in the U.S. recognize the injustice, including Longshore and Warehouse Local 10 and the Service Employees, opening the door for reaching workers.

CNN covered the Jan. 30 filing, saying: “As the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the U.N. Human Rights Commission concluded, the ‘climate of bias and prejudice against the accused’ was so extreme that the proceedings failed to meet the ‘objectivity and impartiality that is required in order to conform to the standards of a fair trial’ and ‘confer[red] an arbitrary character on the deprivation of liberty.’

“Dozens of organizations and individuals around the world—including, for example, numerous Nobel Laureates, national parliaments, and parliamentary committees on human rights—harshly criticized the proceedings. ... No criminal trial in modern American history has been condemned in such a fashion.”

Central to the appeal is the constitutionally protected right to a fair trial by an impartial jury, especially in the electronic age. The three major points in the petition

on behalf of the Five are: that a request was denied to move the trial from Miami, a center of anti-Cuba activity, to Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; that the prosecution was not required to explain race-neutral reasons for using 63.6 percent of its peremptory challenges to eliminate jurors from the Black community, which comprises only 23 percent of Miami’s population; and finally, that Gerardo Hernández was convicted of “conspiracy to commit murder” despite the absence of any actual evidence to support such a grave charge, for which the district court sentenced him to life in prison. The prosecution’s use of a large percentage of peremptory challenges points to purposely eliminating Black jurors solely based on their race.

Although the court briefs do not directly address this issue, the heart of this case lies in the 50-year-long war waged by the U.S. to recolonize Cuba and Cuba’s right to self-defense against imperialist domination. Sometimes this war is overt, like the CIA’s Bay of Pigs invasion and the cruel trade and travel blockade, but it has also been covert—involving germ warfare, hotel bombings and many attempted assassinations of Cuban leader Fidel Castro. This U.S.-bankrolled war has cost the lives of more than 3,000 Cubans, as well as other nationals.

Notorious agents of the CIA’s “dirty wars” in Latin America like Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch walk freely today in Miami. This is why the Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino and Fernando González—came to Florida to quietly monitor the paramilitary forces plotting violence against Cuba.

Three of the Five had volunteered to fight racist apartheid in South Africa as part of Cuba’s international brigades to Angola during the 1970s and 1980s. They are human examples of the Cuban Revolution itself, incarcerated right here inside the crumbling imperialist citadel. For 10 years they have been separated in five different U.S. federal prisons. Visitation by family members is made difficult or denied outright by the U.S. government. Nevertheless, as is widely said in Cuba, “¡Volveran!” They shall return! □

Pakistan dictator not welcome

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The former dictator of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, encountered more than 50 demonstrators outside the Franklin Institute here on Jan. 26, where he was the guest of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia. The activists braved frigid temperatures to protest his invitation to speak on “freedom and democracy.”

The protest was organized by the Pakistan Justice Coalition/National Lawyers Guild Rule of Law Project and the Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum. It received support from local activists, including the Philadelphia International Action Center and the Philly Independent Media Center.

Musharraf came to power in Pakistan through a military coup in 1999. He received more than \$11 billion in direct U.S. aid after Sept. 11. The general used the funds to retain his support within the military and upgrade its weapons.

Shahid Comrade, general secretary of the Pakistan-USA Freedom Forum, told the press, “He is a violator of human rights in Pakistan.” Under Musharraf’s reign, Pakistan’s intelligence agencies detained hundreds of people without providing them any due process. More than 600 are still missing. Journalists and press outlets

faced state censorship, repressive policies and threats.

In November 2007 thousands of lawyers and opposition activists were detained across the country in a crackdown on protesters after Musharraf suspended the constitution and imposed a state of emergency. Police violently suppressed peaceful protest by lawyers and held many on terrorism and treason charges. Almost two-thirds of Pakistan’s senior judges were placed under house arrest.

Ryan Hancock, a member of the National Lawyers Guild and the Pakistan Justice Coalition, was very critical of the World Affairs Council’s invitation. “Musharraf was anything but a person who respected the rule of law and democracy,” Hancock noted. “As lawyers we have an ethical and professional responsibility to confront violations of law no matter where they occur.”

At the meeting Musharraf was allowed to dodge questions about why he suspended his country’s constitution, saying he would “rather skip this.” All questions had to be submitted in writing, allowing him to chose which he would respond to.

Meanwhile, the protesters outside showed their disdain for this former dictator by throwing shoes at two cutouts of his image. □

African Union says: Lift sanctions against Zimbabwe now

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Recent political developments surrounding the formation of a national unity government in the southern African nation of Zimbabwe provide greater impetus for the peoples of the continent and world to demand the immediate lifting of economic sanctions against the country.

A stalled agreement reached last September to create an inclusive government of national unity was finally implemented after weeks of discussions led by South Africa. The agreement is scheduled to take effect on Feb. 13.

Zimbabwe, the target of a well-financed destabilization campaign over the last decade, has been severely affected by the foreign policy imperatives of the Western imperialist countries and their surrogates. They have created serious social and humanitarian challenges for this nation, which won its independence from Britain in 1980.

Results from the African Union summit—held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the week of Feb. 1—clearly urged the United States, Britain and the European Union to end their economic blockade against Zimbabwe. The AU, the continental organization of independent states, has worked for years to ensure a political solution in Zimbabwe that would maintain the country’s stability and guarantee its future as a sovereign state.

According to the Feb. 2 Zimbabwe Herald, “The 53-member African Union executive council on Saturday [Jan. 31] adopted a resolution calling for the immediate lifting of the American and European Union-led economic embargo, saying the international community should instead support Zimbabwe’s inclusive government.”

In response to the current situation in Zimbabwe, the chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Jean Ping of Gabon, said, “I think that everybody today should help Zimbabwe to rebuild its economy because an agreement has been reached.” (Feb. 2, Zimbabwe Herald)

Ping hailed the efforts of the regional 14-member Southern African Development Community (SADC), under the leadership of South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, for its efforts in mediating the inclusive governmental agreement in Zimbabwe between the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriot Front (ZANU-PF) and the opposition parties, the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the MDC-Mutambara (MDC-M).

Jakaya Kikwete, the outgoing AU chairperson and president of Tanzania, said during the summit, “The situation looks promising, it is a step forward.” Numerous messages of support and praise poured in to the summit after South African presidential spokesperson Thabo Masebe also reiterated the call for the rapid lifting of sanctions. Masebe made the point that “this stage is critical in terms of achieving political stability and the first step towards the economic recovery of that country.” (Zimbabwe Herald, Feb. 2)

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe arrived at the AU summit on Jan. 31 and participated fully in the discussions on Feb. 1, which were designed to create a federal continental government for Africa. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who also attended the AU summit and will be the AU’s new elected chairperson, is urging the continent’s leaders to establish the federal system. This idea has been advo-

cated since 1958, when Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first prime minister and leader of the post-independence liberation struggles on the continent, hosted the All-African Peoples Conference in Accra.

Gaddafi’s proposed continental government would be based on three pillars: foreign affairs, defense and trade. Some African states have endorsed the idea of the continental government, while others have taken a more gradualist approach that would see the creation of a federal union government over an extended period of time.

The decision to openly debate the creation of a federal union government was reached at the last AU summit held in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, in July. According to the Zimbabwe Herald of Feb. 2, “Those countries advocating for a Union Government have set an ambitious goal of uniting the continent and sharing its wealth in a manner that benefits all Africans.”

Challenges of reconstruction

Over the last decade, Zimbabwe has been seriously affected by the imposition of economic sanctions and corporate media vilification that sought to justify the imperialist attacks on this independent African state. At present unemployment is high inside the country and hyperinflation has rendered the national currency virtually worthless.

A recent outbreak of cholera resulted from the government’s inability to import the necessary water purification chemicals that prevent water-borne diseases. Civil servants, military personnel and other workers are faced with tremendous hurdles in securing basic food stuffs and transport services.

It has been reported that approximately 2,500-3,000 people have died from chol-

era over the last several months and some 60,000 may have been infected.

Referring to the coalition government, former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said: “This is an important step towards ending the political impasse in Zimbabwe, but it is not a guarantee that Zimbabwe’s distress is over.

“Rebuilding the economy and ending the people’s suffering will take much more work on the part of all Zimbabweans, regional leaders and the international community.” (Agence France-Presse, Feb. 1)

An international appeal for immediate relief

Zimbabwe has been subjected to a campaign of destabilization and under-development since the ruling ZANU-PF party, at the aegis of the revolutionary war veterans, instituted a comprehensive land reform program for the country. A national liberation war during the 1960s and 1970s had been fought by the African people to regain their land and political independence stolen by the British colonialists beginning in the 1890s.

During 2000, thousands of war veterans and their supporters marched onto European settler-controlled farms and seized the land. The Lancaster House agreements of 1979, which ended the revolutionary war and brought Zimbabwe independence, did not institute the land reform that was the basis of the liberation struggle.

However, the imperialist nations of the U.S. and Britain had promised to provide assistance to the European settlers so that they could hand over land to the African people who had been displaced during the colonial era. This aid from the Western states was never forthcoming. Consequently, the ZANU-PF government

had no choice but to support the land seizure, which became known as the Third Chimurenga (struggle).

The opposition MDC was formed with the financial and political backing of the imperialist states. With the creation of an inclusive national unity government, the imperialists, even based on their own logic, have no legitimate reason to continue the sanctions against Zimbabwe. This has been the cry of the African continent emanating from SADC and the AU.

As with the Palestinians in Gaza, the blockade in Zimbabwe has been devastating to the civilian population. The Britain-based Overseas Aid Commission announced on Jan. 31 that it would send assistance to both Gaza and Zimbabwe.

Anti-imperialist and anti-war activists in the U.S. and other Western capitalist states must demand that the sanctions be immediately lifted against Zimbabwe. In addition to this demand, there should be an appeal for the transport of medicines, medical personnel and supplies, bottled water, food and other humanitarian assistance to the people of Zimbabwe.

Also there needs to be a fundamental change in Africa policy emanating from U.S., Britain and the European Union. The Obama administration garnered the support of the majority of the people in the U.S. because of the mass sentiment opposing racism, economic exploitation, militarism and military intervention.

It is the obligation of those that supported his election, as well as all people of conscience, to demand that not only sanctions be lifted against Zimbabwe but that a new foreign policy orientation be developed that emphasizes people-to-people contacts, non-intervention, and respect for the independence and sovereignty of African states. □

SOUTH KOREA Eviction deaths spark protests

By **John Catalinotto**

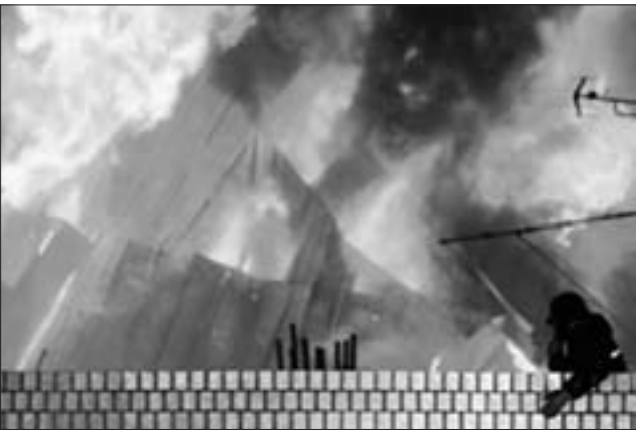
A police attack Jan. 20 on tenants resisting eviction in Seoul, South Korea, led to the death of six people. In response to this atrocity, thousands marched on both Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 demanding that the police chief be fired for this unwarranted use of force to evict people from their homes.

Disputes involving evictions have become everyday occurrences in Seoul. The struggle is between real estate developers and apartment dwellers whose desire to stay in their homes gets in the way of profiteering. The rightist government now in power in South Korea has lined up with the developers, responding to every legitimate protest with massive use of police. During the weekend demonstrations, 10,000 police surrounded the crowds.

On Jan. 20, about 50 people had tried sitting in to keep from being evicted. Some 1,500 police were called in to remove them. Within 24 hours of the beginning of the protest, the government sent the equivalent of riot police or a SWAT team to storm the four-story building.

As the police charged in, a fire broke out. The police took no safety measures but proceeded with the assault. As a result, five tenants and one police officer died in the fire. (Sarabang Group for Human Rights)

Police claim the protesters threw Molotov cocktails. Progressive groups are demanding that civil organizations be



Five people blocking an eviction died in this blaze.

guaranteed participation in the investigation process with the aim of: securing a fair and thorough investigation, punishing those responsible for the incident, reviewing current redevelopment projects that do not guarantee the tenants’ right to housing, and guaranteeing the right to housing as a human right.

The South Korean government has agreed to international human rights rules that protect the right to existing housing if no new housing has been provided. According to the demonstrators, these laws have been violated when the developers evicted tenants under government auspices. These tenants have the right to stay in the old housing if new housing offered them is inadequate, far away from the old area, or both. Tenants complained that the developers harassed them instead

of negotiating with them.

Church organizations have joined the protest since the deaths, demanding that forced redevelopment projects be stopped. “The police, who are supposed to protect the socially weak, have violently suppressed them by mobilizing SWAT team and water cannons,” said a statement issued by the Catholic Urban Poor Pastoral Committee of the Seoul Archdiocese on Jan.

22. (Union of Catholic Asian News)
The church committee demanded that any redevelopment projects undertaken without the agreement of existing tenants be stopped. It also demanded that the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency commissioner, who approved the use of the SWAT team, be punished.

The National Council of Churches in Korea also issued a statement expressing deep regret about the tragic deaths: “The tragic affair happened because of the government’s neo-liberal policy, which has deepened the gap between the rich and the poor, and the police’s excessive loyalty to the government.”

Regular police in South Korea are youthful conscripts like the army. SWAT teams, on the other hand, are career riot police trained in repression. □



Human face of the crisis

Much has been written about the staggering numbers piling up in this economic crisis—the high levels of unemployment, home foreclosures, etc. Most often, they appear in the financial pages of the corporate press as just another economic category, as if workers are nothing but a commodity, a calculation in the equation to determine just how much profit they will make for the bosses.

Less often shown is the consideration that these numbers represent living, breathing, suffering human beings. Take, for example, Ervin Lupoe, who is suspected of killing his spouse, five children and finally himself out of complete desperation. Lupoe was just one of the thousands in Southern California who have been laid off from their jobs, missed mortgage payments and seen their options rapidly disappearing. In this case, both Lupoe and his spouse, Ana, had recently been fired from the multi-billion-dollar Kaiser Permanente because they understated their income on an application for childcare.

Or take Marvin E. Schur, a 93-year-old man who froze to death when the Bay City, Mich., electric company installed a device to restrict the amount of power his home received. Schur, who had more than \$1,000 in unpaid electric bills, died “a slow, painful death,” according to the

Oakland County deputy chief medical examiner. It is unclear whether anyone at the power company ever contacted Schur to inform him that the device was installed. Neighbors said that when they discovered his body on Jan. 17, the temperature in his home was below 32 degrees.

How can any “stimulus” plan not grant immediate relief for those who are now or will soon face the same options as Ervin Lupoe or Marvin Schur? There needs to be an immediate, federal moratorium on utility shutoffs and home foreclosures. There needs to be a real jobs program—one that actually creates jobs, instead of throwing money at corporations and banks in the hope that they’ll do it themselves. The onus rests fully on the government to see to it that people don’t starve, freeze, harm themselves and others, or otherwise suffer as a result of a crisis that capitalism—not the workers—created.

Those staggering numbers represent workers and oppressed people who are becoming increasingly distraught and increasingly angry about the situation. The ruling class may attempt to shut its eyes to the suffering of the individuals who make up those statistics. But when numbers like that coalesce into a serious, united fightback movement, it won’t be ignored. □

People demand no utility cutoffs

Continued from page 6

storms have left hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses without power from Oklahoma to Maine. “There’s gonna be a couple thousand more Marvin Schurs out there right now,” predicted Walworth. (Bay City Times, Jan. 29)

“He had the money to pay his utility bills. It had to be his mind that went,” said the nephew. The limiting devices supposedly have a “reset” button. But for seniors, those in poor health or with impaired mobility, it would be practically impossible to go outdoors to find and fix the limiter.

This January in Michigan was among the coldest on record, according to the National Weather Service.

Emergency measures needed

Below-freezing temperatures, combined with massive snowfalls and icy conditions, have affected huge sections of the United States—from Maine to Texas. At the same time, skyrocketing utility costs translate into heating bills that are 10 percent higher than last year. “We have more [customers] behind on bills,” said Scott Simons, a spokesperson for DTE Energy. (Detroit News, Jan. 29)

Power outages due to recent storms have left over a million families without heat and electricity in many parts of the country. The governors of Kentucky and Oklahoma have declared states of emergency but reported no initial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. President Barack Obama declared a federal state of emergency in Missouri.

At least 42 people have died across the U.S. during the latest storm, which began Jan. 28. Eleven died in Kentucky. “A man and two women were the latest victims after they were found dead in a south-

western Louisville home. One woman was found in a bed; the other two were found in the garage with a generator.” (Detroit Free Press, Jan. 31)

A state of emergency and moratorium on all utility shutoffs should be declared immediately in every part of the U.S. affected by weather conditions, growing unemployment and poverty.

Federal funds to provide shelter, food, health care, clothing and other assistance to the many victims of the snow, ice and cold should be made available at once. Reparations should be paid to the families of those who perished due to the greed and negligence of utility companies. □

Unions shut down France

Continued from page 1

struggle.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy had bombastically claimed last summer: “A new day has arisen in France. Henceforth when there is a strike, nobody will notice.”

He and his government maneuvered to undercut Jan. 29, but, breaking his usual habit, he did keep his mouth shut this time regarding the alleged weakness of organized labor.

Workers in France, like those earlier in Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria, have protested their government bailing out banks while ignoring people’s needs. Since the economic and political crisis shows no signs of abating and the Jan. 29 strike showed the workers are organized and angry, more and larger struggles in France are likely. □



An underground economy and resistance symbol

The tunnels of Gaza

By Sara Flounders

Resistance takes as many forms as life itself dictates.

Life in Gaza could not be more impossible. Its tunnels are a symbol of resistance.

Eighteen months ago, outraged when the Palestinians voted for the militant leadership of Hamas in democratic elections, Israel imposed a total lockdown on the entire population of Gaza.

But the entire people were determined to continue to resist. They found a way to circumvent total starvation.

The Israeli blockade led to a new economic structure, an underground economy. The besieged Palestinians have dug more than 1,000 tunnels under the totally sealed border.

Many thousands of Palestinians are now employed in digging, smuggling or transporting, and reselling essential goods. Smuggling constitutes approximately 90 percent of economic activity in Gaza, Gazan economist Omar Shaban told The Guardian. (Oct. 22, 2008)

The tunnels demonstrate the great ingenuity and enormous determination of the entire population and its leadership.

Because millions of Palestinians have been forced into refugee status outside of historic Palestine, large extended families on both sides of the border help arrange the buying and shipping of goods or send funds so family members locked in Gaza can buy essential supplies.

The tunnels connect the Egyptian town of Rafah with the Palestinian refugee camp of the same name inside Gaza. They have become a fantastic, life-sustaining network of corridors dug through sandy soil. Tunnels are typically three-tenths of a mile long, approximately 45 to 50 feet deep. They cost from \$50,000 to \$90,000 and require several months of intense labor to dig.

They pass under the Philadelphi buffer zone—a border strip of land put under Israeli military control by the 1993 Oslo accords.

The Israeli siege of Gaza, followed by 23 days of systematic bombing and invasion, has created massive destruction and scarcity. Food processing plants, chicken farms, grain warehouses, U.N. food stocks, almost all the remaining infrastructure, and 230 small factories were destroyed. Now hundreds of trucks

packed with essential supplies from international and humanitarian agencies sit outside the strip, refused entry to Gaza by Israeli guards. As soon as the Israeli bombing ended, work on the tunnels resumed.

Lara Marlowe reported from Rafah: “From a distance, you’d think it was a horticultural project. Banks of red earth criss-cross the Palestinian side of the no-man’s land between Gaza and Egypt. Every 20 or 30 meters, young Palestinian men work under what appear to be greenhouse canopies.

“The tunnels of Rafah—more than one thousand of them—are a major stake in the war between Hamas and Israel. Israel wants the tunnels shut; the Palestinians say they would starve without them, because of Israel’s 19-month siege of the Gaza Strip. Despite three weeks of heavy bombing, the majority of the tunnels are open.

“The area has as many holes as a Swiss cheese. ‘Sometimes the tunnels intersect,’ says a worker. ‘We try to avoid it. We go under or over other tunnels. It’s like directing train traffic.’

“The smugglers work in jeans, T-shirts and bare feet. ‘We shore up the collapsed parts with wood,’ Hamdan [a tunnel worker] explains. ‘If the Israelis bomb again, we’ll use metal next time, and concrete the time after that. As long as there’s a siege, the tunnels will keep working.’” (Irish Times, Jan. 26)

Food is towed through on plastic sleighs. Livestock are herded through larger tunnels. Flour, milk, cheese, cigarettes, cooking oil, toothpaste, small generators, computers and kerosene heaters come through the tunnels. Every day, about 300 to 400 gas canisters for cooking come through the lines. On the Egyptian side the trade sustains the ruptured economy while corrupt or sympathetic guards and officers look the other way.

Electricity and fans provide ventilation. Essential supplies of diesel fuel are pumped through the tunnels in hoses and pipes.

Rami Almeghari, editor-in-chief of the Gaza-based Palestinian Information Service and contributor to The Electronic Intifada, has described the organization that goes into digging and maintaining the tunnels. The Hamas-led government in Gaza imposed regulations and

Continued on next page

restrictions on the tunnel trade to avoid accidents and prevent smuggling of drugs and prohibited substances. “However, the besieged Hamas government cannot guarantee an end to the tunnel trade, unless the Israeli blockade comes to a halt.”

Almeghari interviewed one tunnel worker as he loaded cooking oil canisters: “Let Israel besiege us the way it wants, and we bring in what we want. At the end of the day, we will not let anyone repress us.”

Xinhua News headlined a Jan. 22 article: “In spite of Israeli offensive, Gaza tunnels are back to work.”

“We dug tunnels because we have no other alternative. Israel was imposing a very tough blockade on Gaza Strip and the tunnels were the smartest way to defeat this blockade,” Hashem Abu Jazzar, a 23-year-old worker, told Xinhua News.

“As long as Israel is still imposing the siege on Gaza Strip, I don’t think that we will stop working in the tunnels, but if all crossings are fully and permanently opened, I believe that working in tunnels will automatically stop,” said Abu Jabal, a 45-year-old owner of a tunnel.

Commercial tunnels are used only for food, fuel, medicines and basic necessities. Other totally separate tunnels are operated by resistance groups to bring in small weapons and munitions.

Israel claims it drops 100-ton bombs on the tunnels from F-16 jets to stop Palestinian rockets. But closing off supplies to an entire population or bombing life-sustaining tunnels will not prevent the firing of small rockets.

A population with skills, education, massive unemployment, lots of time and no future will be able to build rockets, mortars, pipe bombs and mines out of the tons of scrap metal and twisted ruins that Israel left behind.

The continued blockade is strictly punitive.

The Israeli military and their Pentagon backers are deeply frustrated. The bombing failed to demoralize the Palestinian people or break their will. It is also clear that the massive bombardment of the Rafah border and the targeting of hundreds of tunnels have failed to close these lifelines of basic supplies.

On Feb. 1, Israel again bombed the border, targeting the tunnels.

What is needed is a broad international campaign to demand an end to U.S.-supported Israeli collective punishment and an end to the intended starvation of an entire population.

The only possibility for peace in the region is through the recognition of the full rights of the Palestinian people to return to all their land. Their sovereignty and economic development must be guaranteed.

The immediate starvation siege must be lifted. The international movement that emerged in solidarity with Gaza must focus world attention on this international war crime. □

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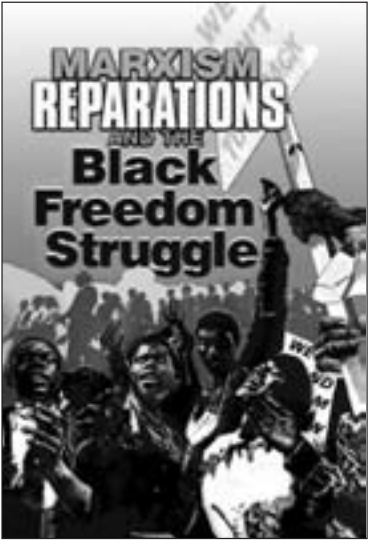
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Pan-Africanism and Palestine solidarity

History of an anti-imperialist struggle

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Following are excerpts from a talk presented in Detroit Jan. 31 at a Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice forum entitled “African-Americans Speak Out for Palestine.” Go to panafricannews.blogspot.com to read Azikiwe’s entire talk.

Beginning with the conclusion of the 19th century, the world Zionist movement has been allied with the system of Western imperialism. This phenomenon did coincide with the consolidation of colonial rule in Africa and institutionalized segregation in the United States. Consequently, the struggle against Jim Crow and apartheid and for genuine national liberation of oppressed peoples in Africa and the United States would inevitably clash with efforts geared toward the building of support for the State of Israel as well as Zionist political aims and objectives.

According to Ismael Zayid in his 1980 study entitled “Zionism: The Myth and the Reality,” “Zionism, as a modern political creed, emanated in Europe, as a recognizable political ideology, at the end of the nineteenth century with three main inherent and fundamental qualities. They are namely settler colonialism, racism and expansion.”

The most well-known connection between the world Zionist movement and European colonialism and apartheid took place in the former colonies of Rhodesia and South Africa. According to Zayid, “From its inception, the Zionist movement saw a natural systematic alliance with European imperialism. The rapid advances of aggressive and chauvinist nationalism in Europe stressed that the superior racial qualities were the basis for the exploitation and ‘civilizational mission,’ under the notion of the ‘white man’s burden.’”

Throughout the negotiations involving the Zionist proposals for white penetration into Africa and Asia, [Theodore] Herzl, in the manner of 19th century imperialist thinkers, spoke of imperialism and colonization as a “noble activity destined to bring civilization to the ‘backward races.’”

Viewing the Jewish state with occidental white binoculars, he asserted that this state is designed to “form a part of a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism.”

African territories were strongly considered as a “homeland” for the Zionist state. This contradicts the proclaimed scriptural basis for the colonization of Palestine. Zayid states that “In their search for a location for the Zionist enclave, to be created, a variety of options were explored including Uganda (east Africa), Tripolitania in Libya (north Africa), Cyprus (Mediterranean), Madagascar (off the southeast African coast), Congo (in central Africa) and Palestine.”

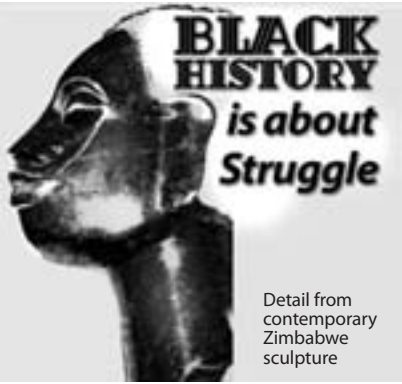
Joseph Chamberlain, the British racist theoretician, told Herzl that “I have seen a land for you on my recent travels, and that is Uganda. It is not on the coast but the climate of the interior is excellent for Europeans.” Though Herzl strongly favored Uganda as the location for the Jewish state, the committee appointed by the World Zionist Congress to explore the area found it unsuitable.

During the period of World War I, Lord Balfour issued his declaration on Nov. 2, 1917, which was utilized as the legal basis for Zionist settlement and the eventual creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Zayid wrote also that “Herzl’s efforts in England included soliciting the backing of major colonialist figures, foremost amongst whom was Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the British colonial outpost in Rhodesia during the late 19th century.”

By 1948, with the creation of the State of Israel and despite the virulent anti-Semitic ideology of the Afrikaner Nationalist Party, which came to power in the Union of South Africa that same year, the party shifted its position strongly in favor of Israel. It also changed its views in support of Jewish community interests in South Africa.

According to Richard P. Stevens in his



study on the Afrikaner-Israel link, as it related to the apartheid system, “Not only did it perceive the necessity of white solidarity if a minority racial regime were to be maintained. Also Dr. Edwin S. Munger, a long-time observer of the South African scene, saw the post-war Jewish-Afrikaners rapprochement was also due to the feeling of highly influential Afrikaners that ‘the elimination of Jews from South Africa would shake the country to its foundation since it would lead to the withdrawal by wealthy Jews of sufficient capital to precipitate an economic slump.’”

All during the period of apartheid in South Africa, the State of Israel was a staunch supporter of the racist state. Consequently, and particularly after the 1967 so-called six-day war, the African National Congress, the liberation movement in South Africa, and the Southwest African Peoples’ Organization, in addition to other liberation movements in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, as well as independent Algeria, were staunch supporters of the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

This alliance between the national liberation struggle in Africa and the Palestinian and other struggles for independence and self-determination in the Arab world continues today in the aftermath of apartheid and the independence of the former colonial nations of Africa. One of the strongest Palestinian support movements exists today in South Africa.

During the World Conference against Racism in 2001 in Durban, South Africa, the United States government, under the Bush administration, attempted to sabotage the international gathering because it allowed the Palestinians equal rights of expression and participation. Other issues as well, including reparations for slavery and the right of self-determination for Indigenous peoples, drew the ire of the United States administration. □

Dems drop health-care option from stimulus plan

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working women and their families.” (rhealitycheck.org)

They are also out of touch with the majority of people who support expansion of family-planning services to low-income women.

To deny expanded family planning services to uninsured women is also to deny them access to general medical care and improved health. Federally funded family planning programs are often the only places where they can obtain vital primary care, including basic check-ups, cancer screenings and STD and other vital testing, which can help prevent serious illnesses and complications.

The short-sighted policy of curtailing federally funded programs can lead to more unintended pregnancies and more abortions. Lack of basic health care can lead to more preventable cancers and

other severe diseases. Early detection and treatment, on the other hand, lower medical costs over the long run while saving lives and promoting better health for women.

The right wing’s myopic view deliberately overlooks the facts: these programs promote health and save money by expanding access to preventive care. Even to a bean counter, these services are worthwhile. The Congressional Budget Office stresses this plan will actually save the federal government more than \$200 million over five years.

The House’s economic package is now going to the Senate. It is likely too late to reinstate the Medicaid Family Planning State Option back into the bill, but women’s rights and health care advocates encourage pressure on the White House and Congress to attach it to upcoming legislation or put it in future budgets. □

La masacre de Gaza aísla globalmente al estado israelita

Por John Catalinotto

El salvaje asalto de Israel en contra de la población de Gaza ha producido la más profunda furia mundial en contra del estado colono respaldado por Estados Unidos. Quizá nada ha simbolizado esto tanto como el reporte del veterano luchador contra el apartheid Dennis Brutus, mientras encabezaba una protesta en Durbán, África del Sur, en contra del Embajador de Israel Dov Segev-Steinberg. Brutus fue un organizador decisivo en la campaña del boicot cultural en contra del apartheid del África del Sur en las décadas de los ochenta y los noventa.

Después de observar tres semanas de una guerra horripilante en contra de un pueblo, el mundo está a punto de llevar a cabo una campaña contra el estado israelita similar a la que ayudó a debilitar al apartheid en Sur África. Esta se conoce ahora mundialmente como la Campaña para el Boicot, Desinversión y Sanciones, (ó BDS), la cual incluye el rechazo masivo a la compra de o inversión en las mayores corporaciones que operan, apoyan o proveen armas de represión al estado israelita.

Casi todos los grupos opuestos a la ocupación israelita de Palestina o a la más reciente masacre en Gaza han planteado la Campaña BDS como la forma de proceder

con la lucha, desde la vocera del movimiento antiglobalización Naomi Klein, hasta los sindicatos de África del Sur.

Muchas personas, organizaciones y hasta países enteros también se movilizan para llevar ayuda humanitaria a l@s palestin@s en Gaza. Por ejemplo, Venezuela ha enviado un equipo de 20 doctor@s.

Las protestas continúan mundialmente

Aunque el régimen israelita anunciaba el cese al fuero y planeaba la retirada de las tropas de Gaza, algunas de las más grandes protestas ocurrían en el fin de semana del 17 de enero. Decenas de miles se manifestaron en Islamabad y Karachi, Pakistán donde quemaron tanto la bandera israelita como la estadounidense. En ese mismo fin de semana, casi todos los países tuvieron una protesta. En Asia hubo protestas en Srinigar, Cachemira; Kuala Lumpur, Malasia; Yakarta, Indonesia; Islamabad, Pakistán; y hasta en Kabul, Afganistán. En Ankara, Turquía, la gente fue a la embajada de los Estados Unidos donde denunciaron a Estados Unidos como socio en los crímenes de Israel.

En Europa 200.000 personas marcharon en Roma mientras que decenas de miles se tomaron las calles en Londres,

Paris y Madrid, habiendo otras protestas en todo el estado Español, incluyendo una de 15.000 personas en Santiago de Compostela, la capital de Galicia el 18 de enero. Otras protestas tuvieron lugar en los países escandinavos.

Las protestas del 15 de enero en Panamá compararon la masacre de civiles palestin@s a los ataques del 1964 y 1989 por Estados Unidos contra civiles panameñ@s. Otras manifestaciones tuvieron lugar en Chile y en Brasil.

El Ministro de Defensa israelí Ehud Barak canceló su visita a la Universidad de Tel Aviv el 19 de enero después de que l@s estudiantes le llamaran “asesino”. Una organización antiguerra en el estado israelita, Valor para Rehuser, publicó un anuncio en un periódico condenando el asesinato de cientos de civiles palestin@s y pidiéndoles a los soldados que rehuseran pelear en Gaza.

Una vez dado el cese al fuego, la mayoría de las manifestaciones en el fin de semana del 24 de enero fueron más pequeñas e iban dirigidas a objetivos concretos para enfatizar sus puntos. Unas 1.500 personas izaron la bandera palestina sobre Lisboa, en Portugal.

Una de las acciones significativas fue la protesta ante la cadena noticiera BBC en Londres, después de que ésta rehusera pub-

licar una petición de ayuda humanitaria para Gaza. Los sindicatos en la BBC y organizaciones eclesiásticas en toda Bretaña se unieron en una larga protesta en contra de la gerencia de la BBC. Actualmente una amplia sección de la población tiene una campaña para regresar las licencias a la BBC, un tipo de boicot.

Juicio por crímenes de Guerra

Hay varios intentos en curso para acusar a l@s líderes y militares israelíes por crímenes de guerra y crímenes en contra de la humanidad. Hay por lo menos dos iniciativas de esta clase. Una es para hacer acusaciones por medio de la Corte Penal Internacional (CPI), (para ver la petición, visite a <http://tlaxcala.es> y haga clic en el enlace “Campañas”). Otro esfuerzo es el intento para que la Asamblea General de la ONU cree un tribunal especial para que procese el caso contra Israel (vea: <http://petitiononline.com/EAFORD09/>).

Las organizaciones Human Rights Watch, Amnistía Internacional, el Centro Palestino para los Derechos Humanos basado en Gaza, y B'tselem, el Centro Israelí para los Derechos Humanos en los Territorios Ocupados, han dicho que Israel debe ser investigado por posibles crímenes de guerra.

Aunque hay muchos obstáculos para presentar estas acusaciones —por ejemplo, ni EEUU ni Israel reconocen la autoridad de la CPI—sólo la idea de las acusaciones ha producido resultados. Ya Tel Aviv ha nombrado un equipo de expertos en derecho internacional encabezado por el ministro de justicia de Israel para defender a sus tropas y oficiales militares de posibles acusaciones.

Aunque ninguna acusación ha sido hecha en contra de los EEUU por su complicidad al armar la máquina de guerra de Israel, las protestas mundiales han señalado el papel jugado por los EEUU en la masacre.

Aunque el poder del veto que tiene EEUU en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU hace improbable que cualquier institución de la ONU juzgue a Israel, existen sin embargo otras posibilidades legales. “Oficiales israelíes en la cadena de mando que resultaron en atrocidades pueden ser procesados en cortes nacionales siempre que estén presentes físicamente en la jurisdicción”, según un abogado de derecho internacional que dio su opinión legal anónimamente. Esto significa que por ejemplo, si un oficial israelí estuviera viajando en España, él o ella podrían enfrentar detención y juicio bajo la ley española. Esto ocurrió en el caso del fascista chileno, el General Augusto Pinochet.

Algun@s han considerado la posibilidad de conducir tribunales populares. Estos son presentaciones públicas de testimonios de crímenes de guerra que pueden condenar políticamente a los oficiales y generales y a sus colaboradores. Mientras que no puede castigar directamente a las personas culpables, un tribunal popular tiene la ventaja de que puede exponer el imperialismo de los EEUU y de la Unión Europea que apoyaron el brutal ataque de Israel contra Gaza.

Los tribunales pueden ser coordinados con planes para campañas de boicot, desinversión y sanciones. □

Una decisiva derrota para Israel

El siguiente ensayo por Musa Abu Marzuq, subjefe del comité político de Hamas, fue publicado en The Guardian el 22 de enero.

Las metas de la guerra israelí contra Gaza estuvieron planteadas mucho antes de su inicio: eliminar al movimiento Hamas y su gobierno, lograr la reinstauración del líder de Fatah, Mahmud Abbas, en Gaza, y poner fin a la resistencia armada. Dos objetivos más no fueron anunciados. Primero, restablecer la debilitada confianza del público israelí en sus Fuerzas Armadas luego de su derrota por Hizbolá en 2006. Segundo, dar un impulso político a la coalición gobernante en las elecciones venideras.

Por eso, declaramos que Israel perdió y perdió decisivamente. ¿Qué logró Israel? La enorme matanza de civiles, niños y mujeres, y la destrucción de viviendas, edificios ministeriales y otras infraestructuras, con las armas más avanzadas de los EEUU y otras armas químicas y de fósforo prohibidas internacionalmente. Casi dos mil niño@s fueron matad@s y herid@s en la persecución de metas políticas. Muchas organizaciones internacionales consideraron estos ataques como crímenes de guerra, sin embargo casi ninguna palabra de condena fue pronunciada por ningún/a líder del Oeste. ¿Cuál es el mensaje que quiere enviar la Unión Europea a l@s palestin@s con su vergonzoso silencio sobre estos crímenes cuando habla incessantemente sobre los derechos humanos?

Más que nada, las últimas tres semanas y los 18 meses anteriores, han confir-

mado que l@s palestin@s nunca podrán ser derrotad@s ni por hambre, ni por estrangulación económica, ni por ataques brutales. L@s líderes europe@s tienen una sola opción: la de reconocer el resultado de un proceso democrático que ell@s habían demandado y apoyado.

La agresión fracasó en destruir ó debilitar el gobierno encabezado por Hamas, o hacer que l@s palestin@s se opusieran a Hamas. De hecho, el apoyo de las masas para Hamas es más fuerte ahora en Palestina y en el mundo. La capacidad militar de Hamas tampoco ha sido dañada. Esto explica la prisa que tenía Israel por firmar el acuerdo tan extraño con los Estados Unidos para evitar que las armas llegaran a Hamas. Está destinado a fracasar. Como aseguraron el ex jefe israelí del estado mayor Moshe Yaalon y Benjamín Netanyahu [líder del partido derechista Likud], las fuerzas israelíes fracasaron en lograr sus objetivos.

¿Por qué se le permite a Israel recibir un caudal continuo de las armas más letales, incluyendo armas prohibidas, mientras que a los movimientos de resistencia nacional de les niega medios para su defensa? Las leyes internacionales permiten que las naciones ocupadas resistan a sus ocupantes, y ese es un derecho que nosotros intentamos utilizar plenamente.

Israel debe aceptar la realidad de que es incapaz de quebrar la resistencia palestina. De la misma forma, Europa debe aceptar que retornar a Abbas en un tanque israelí no es una opción. Ni tampoco la es los intentos de ganar “diplomáticamente” lo que la fuerza militar de Israel fracasó

en asegurarse por la fuerza. Declarar que toda asistencia para la reconstrucción de Gaza debe pasar por el gobierno ilegal del designado Primer Ministro de la Autoridad Palestina Salam Fayyad, sugiere que no hay fin a la explotación de l@s palestin@s por algunos partidos. Nunca dejaremos de tratar de lograr la unidad nacional, pero nunca permitiremos que sea lograda comprometiendo los derechos de l@s palestin@s.

Y al Presidente Obama le decimos: La ola de esperanza que surgió de su elección fue duramente golpeada por su silencio sobre la masacre en Gaza. Ésto fue agravado por su comentario antes de su elección a favor de l@s colonos israelíes en Sderot. Le haría bien saber la historia de los lugares de los cuáles habla. Sderot, que puede ser conocido por algun@s como un pueblo israelita, yace sobre las ruinas de Najd, una aldea palestina que fue saqueada en mayo del 1948 por gangas sionistas terroristas. L@s aldean@s fueron despiadadamente forzad@s a salir fuera de de sus camas y de sus casas sin nada más que la ropa que llevaban puesta, convirtiéndoles en refugiad@s por los próximos 61 años. Ésta es la historia de Sderot. Nunca es un buen comienzo el confundir al tirano con sus víctimas, pero todavía hay espacio para el restablecimiento de un optimismo apasionado. Solo si usted decide justamente tratar la cuestión de l@s 6 millones de refugiad@s palestin@s y el fin de la ocupación de la tierra palestina, incluyendo a Jerusalén, podrá usted a comenzar una nueva relación con el mundo musulmán. □